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THE MANOR OF SHELTER ISLAND

An Address read before the
Annual Meeting of
THE ORDER OF COLONIAL LORDS OF MANORS
IN AMERICA
On April 23, 1931

BY
MISS CORNELIA HORSFORD

NEW YORK
1934

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THE MANOR OF SHELTER ISLAND

Shelter Island lies between the two arms of the fork at the east end of Long Island, New York. The Indian name was Manhansucke Ahaquatsuwamock, meaning "island sheltered by islands," hence Shelter Island. Both names are mentioned in the grant of the Manor. In 1665, Long Island and Staten Island were erected into a shire, called after the one in England Yorkshire. This was in like manner divided into separate districts called Ridings. The present Suffolk County was the East Riding, and that Shelter Island was therein is also mentioned in the manor grant.

Shelter Island consists of about eight thousand acres, of hills and harbors and creeks, winding far into the land. There are extensive woodlands and some of the best arable land in Suffolk County.

About three hundred or more deer run free in the woods, and a few foxes. Many fish-hawks return year after year to rebuild their picturesque nests. There are other hawks, owls and bats, pheasants, woodcock and quail, little green herons, and the black-crowned night heron. Occasionally the great blue heron may be seen fishing at twilight on the marshy shore of some creek. Of late a pair of pure white herons have spent the summer near the Manor House. Of course there are many varieties and great numbers of song birds and other birds both rare and common.

The Indians found here by the white men, were the Manhansett tribe, of which Pogatticut (also called Yoko and about nine other names), was the Sachem. He was the Great Sachem of all the tribes, ten or more, of Paumanocc, or Long Island from Hempstead to the east.

When Yoko died on Shelter Island where he resided, he was carried by his braves to Montauk for burial. On their way they stopped over-night in a hollow between what are now the villages of Sag Harbor and East Hampton. A dead Sachem was never laid down. The place where his feet rested was considered sacred ever after by the members of his tribes. The excavation was about twelve inches deep by eighteen in diameter. For a century afterward or more, any Indian who passed that way stopped to pay tribute to his memory, clearing the spot of dead leaves and stones. It was called "Whooping Boy's Hollow." In 1897 a stone was dug

SHELTER ISLAND MANOR HOUSE WITH
VIEW OF CREEK

up on Shelter Island which had curious characters cut on it. A rubbing of this was sent to the late Professor John Campbell of McGill University at Montreal, who was a noted reader of inscriptions. He said that the characters belonged to a tribe of Iroquois Indians living in South-eastern Nova Scotia. He was therefore unable to account for their appearance at Shelter Island; but the name Yoko was on the stone, and it is a fact that an Indian woman in Sag Harbor told John Gardiner that the Montauks and Iroquois understood each other. This stone now stands upright under the great trees near the Manor House.

* * *

Shelter Island passed through the hands of various agents under King Charles I and King Charles II. It was finally bought by a group of Englishmen for "sixteen hundred pounds of good merchantable Muscovado sugar." These gentlemen had extensive sugar plantations at Barbadoes and wished to acquire oak timber from Shelter Island to manufacture hogsheads in which to ship their sugar to England. The vessel used for this purpose was called the "Golden Parrot." Nathaniel Sylvester was to live on Shelter Island and superintend the work. At this time a confirmation was procured from Yoko and other chiefs of the tribes, who agreed to put away their dogs (wolves) or to make satisfaction for any damage done by them. The paper states that March 23, 1652, Yoko delivered unto the aforesaid Nathaniel Sylvester and Ensign John Booth one turfe and one twig in their hands according to the usual custom of England.

The Sylvesters were Englishmen, who through their adherence to King Charles I and subsequently to King Charles II, found it inconvenient to remain in England. While Cromwell was leading his army against the Scots at Dunbar in 1650, the Sylvesters,—there were five brothers, all of whom were wealthy merchants—were resolutely preparing to leave the kingdom; and when on the third of September, 1651, Cromwell achieved his great victory over Charles II at Worcester, they had already nearly three months before secured Shelter Island in America and the family had found a temporary asylum in Holland. Three of the brothers with their mother moved to Barbadoes.

Nathaniel Sylvester came to Shelter Island to live in 1652. He brought with him his young wife, Grissell Brinley, who

was only sixteen years old. She was baptised at St. James's Church, Clerkenwell, London, January sixth, 1636.

She was the daughter of Thomas Brinley of Datchet in Buckinghamshire, two miles from Windsor Castle.

An extensive account of the Brinleys was collected under the direction of the late Mr. Charles A. Brinley, of Philadelphia, from which a few notes have been taken.

"King Charles I granted by a special charter to Thomas Brinley and his associates as a mark of esteem and as an emolument, at a nominal yearly stipulation, a vast tract of land consisting of some ten thousand acres in Yorkshire, including manors, villages and churches with all the accompanying privileges. This grant with all its details sealed with the great seal of England dated December 27, in the fourth year of the reign of Charles I, is on record at the Record Office, Chancery Lane, London, England, and signed 'Witness the King at Westminster, 24 March 1636'."

Thomas Brinley was buried in the Parish Church at Datchet under the aisle, in front of the transept, with the following inscription:

"Here lieth the body of Thomas Brinley, Esq., who was one of the auditors of the Revenue of King Charles the First and of King Charles ye second. Born in the City of Exeter, He married Anne, youngest daughter of Wm. Wase of Petworth in Sussex, gent., who had issue by her, five sons and seven daughters. He dyed the fifteenth day of October in the year of our Lord 1661."

* * *

The house which was awaiting the Sylvesters at Shelter Island stood for eighty years, and was succeeded by, and partly incorporated into, the present Manor House, which was built by Sylvester's grandson Brinley Sylvester in 1737, so that the latter in its own frame-work covers over 280 years. This house when it was rebuilt was said to be the finest in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It was panelled and had a fire-place in every room. The "Golden Parrot" went back and forth between Shelter Island and Barbadoes, carrying its loads of oak staves and bringing back necessities and comforts for the house and farm.

The inventory of Nathaniel Sylvester's property at the time of his death is abundant for those days, showing how it was possible for them to entertain as they did. A selected list follows:

Pewter 280 lbs.—4 dozen plates,—1 dozen porringers.—13 candle-sticks,—2 great flagons,—3 basins,—2 dozen saucers,—4 pairs of brass candle-sticks,—1 pair of andirons,—1 chafing dish,—2 warming pans,—2 smoothing irons,—2 pairs of bellows, a Turkey wrought couch,—12 Turkey wrought chairs,—6 green chairs,—10 leather chairs,—1 Turkey wrought carpet,—1 clock,—1 case with bottles,—10 feather beds,—12 table cloths,—9 dozen napkins,—32 towels,—60 books great and small,—1 silver tankard,—10 silver spoons,—11 slaves,—200 sheep,—20 horses great and small,—70 cattle great and small,—60 swine. A cyder mill and press,—a farm at Plumgutt, 6 acres or thereabout at Block Island. A boat, etc.

* * *

The Sylvesters in what might seem to have been a lonely home, had a number of pleasant friends among the early settlers of the country. The first to be mentioned is John Winthrop, Jr., son of the first governor of Massachusetts. He acquired Fisher's Island in 1640 and moved there in 1646. He was one of the distinguished scholars of his age and his name is among the founders of the Royal Society of London in 1661. He had also paid much attention to medicine and was well skilled in that science.

A letter from Sylvester to Winthrop dated Oct. 8, 1655, entreats his advice about the treatment of his own two months' old baby. The young parents were distracted with anxiety and the letter written hurriedly is very pathetic. This baby grew up to be Grissell Sylvester, to whom at sixteen her lover Latimer Sampson bequeathed his entire fortune and lands. Later she married James Lloyd of Boston and her property was erected into the Manor of Queens' Village. In this same letter Sylvester asked to buy an Irish servant, if they were willing to part with her. In another letter to Winthrop he wrote of the severe winter and feared "our friends in Virginia have suffered much." Sylvester's name is signed to many deeds and documents in Virginia.

The Brinleys of Newport kept up their friendship, and of course the Lloyds. There were the Gardiners of Gardiner's Island, the Griswolds of New London, and the Morrisses of Morrisania. Lewis Morris was an executor of Sylvester's will and a Trustee. Finally Governor Richard Nicolls from whom one letter is extant signed "Yor affectionate loving friend and servant."

STEPS LEADING TO LOWER GARDEN

In 1656 the Quakers were beginning to be persecuted in New England. Sylvester welcomed many of these to the safe shelter of his island home. Many remained at Shelter Island and their graves may be seen where they were laid to rest.

Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick, ancestors of the Quaker poet Whittier, "imprisoned, starved and whipped, banished on pain of death," arrived in an open boat, shortly to die, within three days of each other. Mary Dyer went from Shelter Island and returned to Boston where she was later hanged from the old elm on Boston Common. George Fox, the Founder of the Society of Friends, preached to the Indians in the dooryard. In his journal he writes, "I had a meeting among the Indians at which were their King with his council and about an hundred Indians more. They sat down like Friends and heard very attentively while I spoke to them by an interpreter, an Indian that could speak English well. (This was probably Checkanoe, supposed to have helped John Eliot with his Indian Bible.)

* * *

In 1666 when Governor Richard Nicolls had been in New York nearly two years, he granted to Sylvester the first English manorial grant in what is now New York, as far as is known at present.

The following words used in other grants recognized by our Order, prepared the way for the magnificent privileges bestowed later by other Governors.

"The said Island and premisses, now is, and forever hereafter, shall be, held, Deemed, reputed, taken and be, an Intire infranchized Towneship, Mannor and place of itselfe, and shall allwayes from time to time, and at all times hereafter, have, hold and enjoy, like and equall Priviledges and Immuntyes with any Towne, Infranchized place or Mannor within this Government and shall in no manner or way, be Subordinate or belonging unto, have dependency upon, or in any wise be under the Rule Order or Direction of any Riding, Towneship or Townesships Place or Jurisdiction upon Lond Island, ... and shall be Ruled Ordered and directed in all matters as to Government, accordingly by the Governor and his Councell, etc." Another item is that for "Yielding, rendering and paying yearly and every yeare unto his Royall Highness the Duke of Yorke, or his Heires

PORTRAIT OF THOMAS DERING
BY JOSEPH BLACKBURN
(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

. . . . one Lambe, upon the first day of May, if the same shall be demanded." Six days earlier they had received another document stating that "Nathaniel Sylvester of Shelter Island in behalf of himselfe and of his brother hath of his own voluntary free will and good affection to this government, advanced and paid towards ye support and maintenance thereof, the sum of £150 sterling. I, for and in consideration of the aforesaid sum of £150 and for other good causes and considerations me thereunto moving, doe hereby grant unto ye said Nathaniel Sylvester and Constant Sylvester and to their heirs and assignes forever, that ye said island called Shelter Island is forever hereafter shall be, by these presents discharged, exonerated and acquitted from all taxes and rates, either civill or millitary, and from all trayning, setting forth and keeping any soulders, horses, arms, troopers or other warlike provisions, other than what they shall voluntarily doe, for the defense of their said island and this government in cases of foreign invasion or disturbance by the natives. Given under my hand and seale in James fforte ye 25th day of May, in ye year Anno Dom. 1666." Richard Nicolls.

* * *

After seven years of peace and prosperity the Dutch recaptured New York for the United Netherlands. Governor Colve claimed all Long Island and its adjacent islands.

On August 26, 1673, Nathaniel Sylvester arrived at Fort Willem Hendrik and offered his submission and requested confirmation of his previous privileges granted to him and his island called Shelter Island.

Furthermore he declared he had orders from his neighbour David Gardiner to offer submission for him and his island, promising that he would come in like manner in person on the first opportunity. After much discussion the Dutch confiscated the lands, houses, goods, negroes and effects of whatever sort they might be, belonging to Constant Sylvester and Thomas Middleton and their heirs and assigns, because they were Englishmen and the Dutch were enemies to the Kings of England and France; but they by no means included Nathaniel Sylvester, his real and personal goods, effects, negroes, etc., because of his submission. Equal protection was therefore granted and allowed to him, "the same as to all others of their good subjects, with additional confirmation of all profit, rights and privileges which by previous gov-

PORTRAIT OF MARY SYLVESTER (MRS. THOMAS DERING) BY JOSEPH BLACKBURN

(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

ernments had been granted to him and his posterity. Done at Fort Willem Hendrik 29 August 1673."

Thus Nathaniel Sylvester became sole proprietor of the Manor of Shelter Island under both the English and Dutch governments with equal privileges from both, having given his bond for £500 sterling, in provisions of this country.

* * *

On August 29th, the Dutch demanded the submission of Southampton, ordering them to deliver the badges of their Civil and Military power—namely, the Constable's staff and the Colonel's; promising to them equal privileges with their own nation. Struck with amazement and terror, they sent to Hartford for advice, but received no encouragement,—then to New York, but there they were also shy, but referred them to Captain Sylvester who had come from Hartford with them shortly before. He advised them by all means to submit to the Dutch. Having no choice, they decided to do this, twenty-seven names being signed to the document.

On October 23rd Gov. Winthrop wrote to his son Fitz-John Winthrop at New London,—that requests for help against the Dutch had come from residents of the towns of Eastern Long Island, telling of a report that the Dutch intended to send a small vessel with six guns and three hundred men to compel them to take the oath of submission, which they refused to do, and asking for 50 or 60 men from Connecticut to help them.

"Mr. Willis," he wrote, "was very forward, and preparing to go in the whale boat joined with yourself. Possibly some fit way of treaty without argument,—after the usual way of all nations, especially the Christian,—may be arranged." Counsel with Captain Sylvester he advised also.

On October 25th Councillor Steenwyck states to the Council at Fort Willem Hendrik that one Nicholas Eedes dwelling at Southold came to him yesterday, saying he had been sent by Colonel Lewis Morris and Nathaniel Sylvester, with request that his honor would be pleased to order the sending of a second embassy to the East end of Long Island, so that the innocent may not be punished with the guilty.

From the journal of Capt. Cornelis Evertsen on board the frigate *Zee-hond*, with the Dutch Commissioners from New Orange to the East end of Long Island, November 6, 1673; "Lying at anchor in Plumgut. At daybreak discovered a sail

PORTRAIT OF MARGARET SYLVESTER (MRS. CHESEBOROUGH) BY JOSEPH BLACKBURN

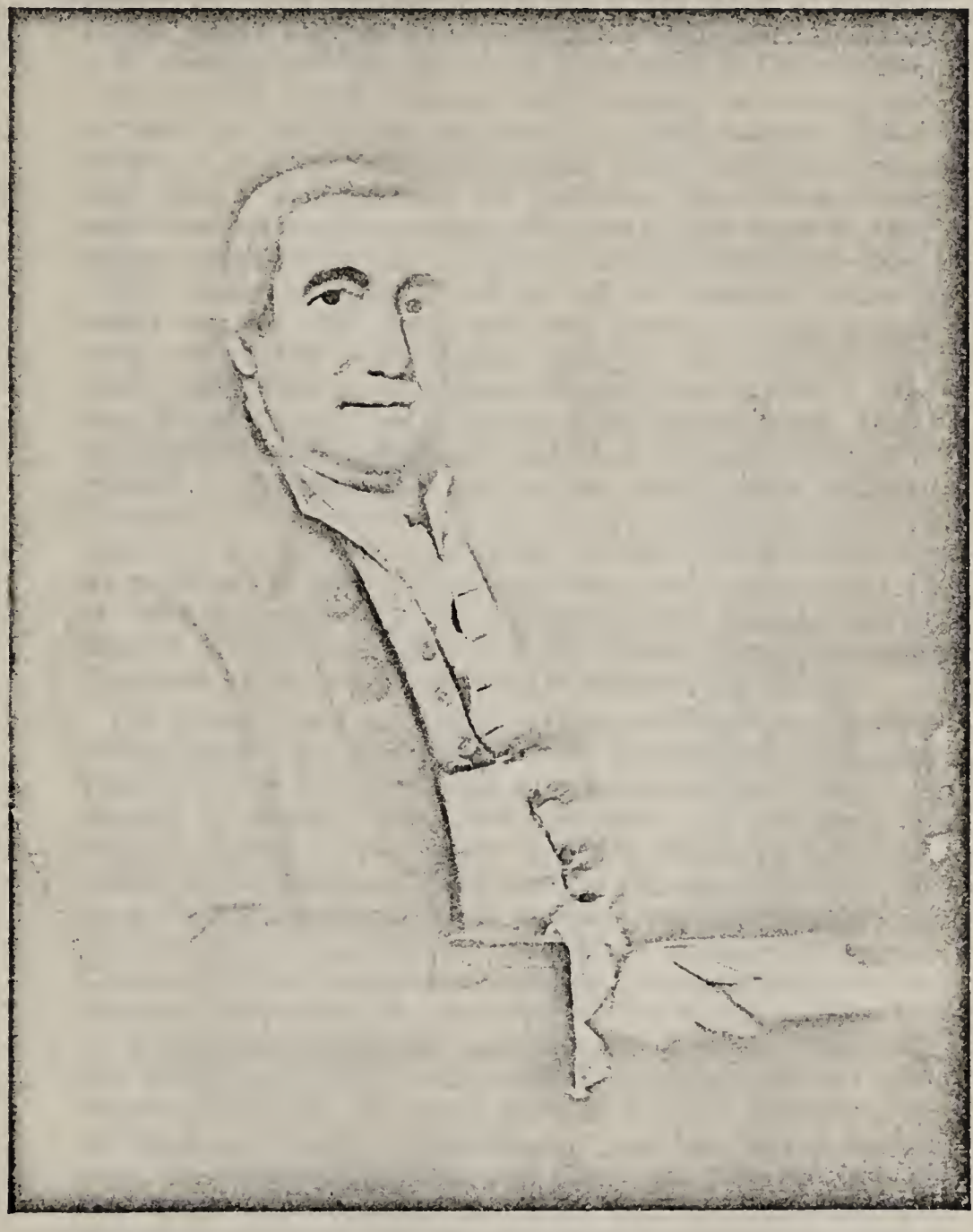
(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

to leeward. We commanded them to come on board and heard that Captain Fitz-John Winthrop and Mr. Willis were on the vessel with a letter for Governor Anthony Colve. We then showed them our commissions, together with the article penned by those of the East end. Their answer was that the 9th article had not been consented to and consequently all the other articles and their actual submission to their High Mightinesses had been rendered null and void. Towards evening we again sailed and anchored before Sylvester's Island. Sylvester sent his son with a boat to carry the commissioners ashore who spent the night with him. The next morning the Commissioners of Connecticut gave us a copy of their commission, empowering them to treat with such foes as they might meet at Long Island or Shelter Island. They were to endeavor to divert them from using hostility and to let them know that if they did proceed, it would provoke them to a due consideration of what they should be obliged to do next."

They further delivered to us a copy of the letter sent by the Court of Connecticut to the Governor Anthony Colve, requesting that "we should abandon our voyage and not proceed further in persuading the English to take the oath." Whereupon we answered that we were on duty bound to execute our Commission, and so departed for Sylvester's Island. About ten o'clock the Connecticut gentlemen rowed up toward Southold in the boat belonging to Sylvester's ship, with the King's Jack in the stern, and the Dutch Commissioners immediately followed in a boat they had borrowed from Captain Sylvester with the Prince of Orange's flag also in the stern. They arrived at two p. m. at Southold where they heard the drum beat and the trumpets sound whenever the Connecticut gentlemen passed by. There was a troop of cavalry riding back and forth and a troop of 26 or 28 men on horseback and sixty footmen in arms. They met at one Mr. Moore's house and had more or less talk on both sides, the English persisting in saying they had nothing to do with the Dutch and that wherever they went, the English would be there."

The Dutch conceived that it would be useless to effect anything and returned to Sylvester's Island where they spent the night, and sailed for New Orange the next day at noon.

The winter passed away without further annoyance from the enemy; but at the end of February a letter from Fitz-John Winthrop to John Allyn, Secretary of Connecticut,

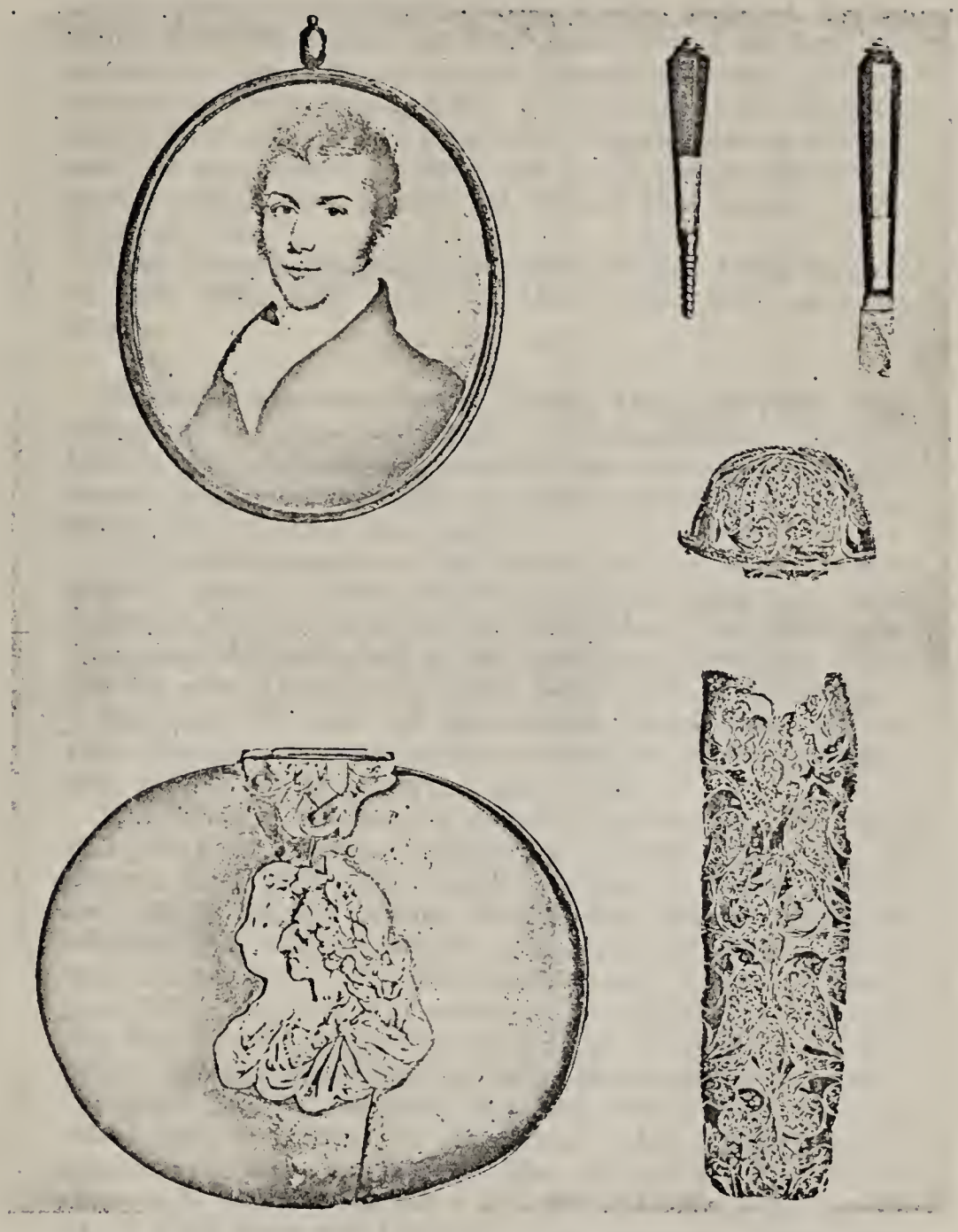


PORTRAIT OF EZRA L'HOMMEDIEU, BY EARLE

(Courtesy of the New York Historical Society)

dated at Southold, tells that he is there obedient to the command received from the Governor and his Council at Hartford: "By good Providence we had a fair wind to Shelter Island, where I stopped a few hours for intelligence; but met with nothing considerable to our purpose—but Captain Sylvester's great civility to myself and company as we were the servants of the Colony which he so much honors; and I believe, if my experience therein upon former public occasions may give a judgment of his generous entertainment, no particular interest has outdone him but to pass these engagements, which are fit only a Colony's acknowledgment,—after a little discourse with him we set sail for Southold where I heard that the ship Snow with one Ketch and two sloops, were anchored at White Stone waiting a fair wind for this place.—bound hither with great resolution to reduce or destroy the towns on the East end of Long Island upon which intelligence I immediately dispatched an express to Captain Howell at Southampton and to the chief officer at East Hampton. In a few hours I had the opportunity of consultation with them; and in particular we did consider how far we might act in defending the provisions which they expected at Shelter Island; but Mr. Hubbard, the minister from Boston, Mr. Richard Smith and Mr. Brinley thought it most expedient to apply all our force in securing the towns.

On Sabbath morning about 7 o'clock the Dutch vessels shot within Plum Gut. The soldiers from Southampton and East Hampton were with me sooner than I could expect. The ship stopped at Shelter Island and demanded the provision of Captain Sylvester, who being at their mercy, as they had landed fifty armed men, delivered the provision. The Dutch spent the night there and in the morning were soon up against Southold, where they placed the squadron in handsome order. Captain Sylvester being then on board endeavouring to divert hostility and prevent the shedding of blood, was desired by the Commander to deliver their demand to myself, which he was willing to do, and it was in these words as near as I can remember, that he was come there to demand subjection to the High and Mighty States General and His Serene Highness, the Prince of Orange, and that upon their surrender, they might enjoy the same privileges that were confirmed to the rest of the towns, but upon refusal he would destroy them with fire and sword; As soon as I received this message I informed the officers and soldiers thereof, who unanimously resolved to oppose them to the utmost hazard of their lives,—



SAMUEL SMITH GARDINER, 7TH IN DESCENT FROM LION GARDINER, BORN AT EAST HAMPTON, L. I., ON MAY 5, 1789.

whereupon I returned this answer to the Commander-in-Chief —'Sir, yours by Captain Sylvester I have received, and in return thereunto I give you this answer, that I am here, appointed by the authority of his Majesty's Colony of Connecticut, to secure these people. In obedience to his Majesty, and by God's assistance I hope to give a good account thereof, and you may assure yourself, that I will receive you in the same condition, as a person that disturbs His Majesty's subjects; etc. etc.'"

They then exchanged a few shots, no one being injured on either side. After which the Dutch sailed away, never to return.

* * *

Nathaniel Sylvester died at Shelter Island in 1680. The eulogy on his monument reads: "An Englishman, intrepid, loyal to duty, faithful to friendship, the soul of integrity and honour, hospitable to worth and culture—sheltering ever the persecuted for conscience sake."

The original grantee of the Manor had five sons. On the death of three of these without issue, the eldest son, Giles Sylvester, became the owner of four-fifths of the Island, the remaining fifth being held by the second son, Nathaniel. Giles and his wife, Hannah (Savage) Gillam, left no children.

Nathaniel Sylvester of this second generation, with his wife, Margaret Hobart, made his residence in Newport, and left, besides two daughters, a son, Brinley.

This Brinley Sylvester, of the third generation, who married Mary Burroughs, daughter of Thomas Burroughs of Boston, went back to his ancestral estate at Shelter Island, and rebuilt the old Manor House. He was prominent in religious and local government, and his friends were men of note in those days. He had two daughters, Mary and Margaret, who tradition said were very beautiful. It was said that they never sat before a fire without wearing gloves, for fear of spoiling their beautiful hands, but the hands were useful hands too, for the story has come down that some one asked Mary if she was not very proud of her beautiful home, many slaves, and fine clothes. She said she saw nothing in them to be proud of—"but I will tell you what I am proud of: it is the linen that I spin." These two girls visited their cousins in Boston, and wrote home to ask if their father would get them a spinet and if they might wear stays. Their portraits, painted by Joseph Blackburn, are now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

OLD STONE BRIDGE, BUILT 1651

Mary Sylvester married Thomas Dering of Boston, and after the death of her father went to live at the Manor House at Shelter Island. They kept a chaplain, Rev. William Adams, a Yale graduate, who had already served in that capacity with Brinley Sylvester, and who lived with the family for thirty years. When Brinley Sylvester died a hatchment of his arms was, after the English custom, hung above the door.

At this time, the correspondence, preserved in four volumes of letters, became wonderfully interesting.

Thomas Dering took a decided stand for liberty when the Revolution broke out. He was a delegate to the New York Provincial Convention, which unanimously adopted the Declaration of Independence. He then returned to Shelter Island, and removed his family for safety to Middletown, Connecticut, first burying the jewels and silver in the cellar of the Manor House, and the brass cannon on the lawn. Some of this silver is now to be seen at the Metropolitan Museum.

In 1771 there were 27 families on Shelter Island, who did their share of patriotic service during the Revolution, when British men-of-war found Gardiner's Bay a safe haven from which to plunder the islands and towns in the neighborhood. Incidents of those days make many fire-side stories. On one occasion the soldiers came to a farmer to commandeer a cow. He told them to take the red one. Why the red one? they asked suspiciously. "Oh, I don't like red-coats," replied the owner.

* * *

Among the heirlooms at Sylvester Manor is a tiny knife and fork with carnelian handles in a silver filagree case of Italian workmanship. This was given to Thomas Brinley by King Charles I and was brought to this country by Grissell Brinley Sylvester. At the same time a linen table cloth, with the name "Carolus Rex" woven in the damask, came with the Brinleys and now belongs to the Brinleys of Philadelphia.

There is also a tortoise-shell snuff box with the heads of William and Mary on the lid in silver, which may have come from another ancestor, William Nicoll of Islip, who went on a mission to the English court during the reign of William and Mary. There is a silver tankard with the initials J and C over an H. This was a wedding gift to Catharine Nicoll and Johnathon Havens. Catharine Nicoll was the daughter of the same William Nicoll and his wife Anna Van Rensselaer who was widow of the first Lord of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck and daughter of the second Lord, Jeremias Van Rensselaer.

OLD BOX WALK THROUGH THE GARDEN

There is a fine belt of wampum representing some treaty with the Indians which came through Ezra L'Hommedieu, a member of three provincial Congresses, descended from the Huguenot Benjamin L'Hommedieu and his wife Patience a daughter of Nathaniel Sylvester. A favorite tradition in the family is that the Sylvesters were rowed in a barge by negro slaves to the church at Southold where Benjamin L'Hommedieu saw Patience, fell in love with her, and shortly married her.

The first signed and dated Book-plate in this country was made by Nathaniel Hurd of Boston for the library at Sylvester Manor, for Thomas Dering of Boston, who married Mary Sylvester, daughter and heiress of Brinley Sylvester, the last lord of the Manor. A piece of the famous golden blanket left by the pirate Captain William Kidd at Gardiner's Island was given Mrs. Horsford who was a Gardiner. This is also in the Manor House. Mrs. Horsford was the daughter of Samuel Smith Gardiner who through his wife Mary L'Hommedieu acquired Sylvester Manor.

An old custom of the family was to decorate with gold leaf the ancient box trees when the heir of the Manor brought home a bride.

The old stone steps leading from a stone built causeway, as old as the first Manor house, have played an important part in the life and history of the guests.

Here the persecuted Quakers were received by Nathaniel Sylvester to shelter, safety and a peaceful home. These steps Mary Dyer descended when she went to Boston, knowing she would have to die there for her religion.

Here Latimer Sampson bade farewell to Grissell Sylvester when he sailed away to Barbadoes, never to return. George Fox, Lewis Morris, Governor John Winthrop of Connecticut, the Dutch Commissioners, and later George Whitefield, the Evangelist, and Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College, all passed over these steps.

Still later John Tyler, President of the United States, brought his beautiful bride Julia Gardiner for a visit, also came the poets Longfellow, Lowell, Helen Hunt and Sarah Orne Jewett and many other guests of note and prominence in the history of their country.

The old garden with its terraces and ancient box hedges is still kept up.

The last lord of the Manor and the last of his name to live on Shelter Island was Brinley Sylvester, but the estate has never passed out of the family and the old customs are still kept up.

REPRODUCTION OF THE MANORIAL GRANT OF
SHELTER ISLAND TO CONSTANT AND
NATHANIEL SYLVESTER, 1666

1570328

APPENDIX

MANORIAL GRANT OF SHELTER ISLAND

RICHARD NICOLLS Esquire, Governor under his Royall Highnesse the Duke of Yorke, of all his Territoryes in America To all to whom these Presents shall come, sendeth Greeting; Whereas there is a certaine Island, Scituate Lying and being in a certaine Bite, Bay or arme of the Sea, which runneth betweene Lands belonging to the Townes of Easthampton, Southampton and Southold, in the East Riding of Yorkshire upon Long Island, by the Indyans formerly called by the name of Manhansucke Ahaquatsuwamocke ,and now commonly knowne by the name of Shelter Island, which said Island was heretofore Purchased from the Indyans by James Harrett, Agent to William Earle of Sterling (in whom the Government then was, by vertue of his Ma*tics* Letters Pattents) and Since by Severall Deeds, Mean Conveyances and Graunts derive from the said Earle of Sterling, James Harrett; and others, as also, from the Indyan Proprietores for a valuable consideration, is come unto the hands of Constant Silvester of the Island of Barbadoes Esqre, and Nathaniell Silvester now Inhabiting and residing in Shelter Island aforesaid Merchant; Now know yee, That by vertue of ye Commission and Authority unto me given by his Royall Highnesse James Duke of Yorke &c, upon whom (as well by the Resignation and Assignmt of the heires of the said William Earle of Sterling, as also by Lawfull Graunt and Patent from his Royall Ma*ty* Charles the Second, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland &c) the Propriety and Govermt of Long Island, and all the Islands adjacent, amongst other things is settled; I do Ratify Confirme and Allow of all the aforesaid Deeds and Purchases, And also do hereby Give Graunt and Confirme unto the said Constant Silvester, and Nathaniell Silvester their Heires and Assignes, the said Island heretofore called Manhansuke Ahaquatsuwamocke, and now knowne by the name of Shelter Island; Together with all the Lands, Soyles, woods, Meadowes, Pastures, Marshes, Lakes, waters

Fishings, Hawking, Hunting and Fowling. And all other Proffitts, Commodityes, Emoluments and Hereditamts to the said Island belonging, with their and every of their appurtenances, and of every part and Parcell thereof. And that said Island & premisses, now is, and forever hereafter, shall be held, Deemed, reputed, taken and be, an Intire infranchized Towneship Mannor and Place of it selfe, and shall allwayes from time to time, and at all times hereafter, have, hold and enjoy, like and equall Priviledges and Immuntyes, with any Towne, Infranchized place or Mannor within this Government, And shall in no manner of way, be Subordinate or belonging unto, have dependency upon, or in any wise be under the Rule, Order or direction, of any Riding, Townesships, place or Jurisdiction upon Long Island, but shall in all Cases, things and matters, be deemed, reputed, taken and held as an absolute Intire, Infranchized Township mannor and place of itself in this Government, And shall be Ruled, Ordered and directed in all matters as to Government, accordingly, by the Governor and his Councell, and the Gen*all* Assizes onely; Provided that no Priviledges or Immuntyes herein Graunted or mentioned to be graunted, shall be meant or Interpreted to extend to the Protecting of any Traytors, Malefactors Fugitives or Debtors, Flying unto the said Island, to the damage of any particular Person, or the obstruction of the Lawes, and the Common and Publick Peace of this Government, and the Justice thereof; To have and to hold the said Island with all and Singular the Appurtenances and primsses, together with the Priviledges Immunityes Franchizes and advantages, herein given and graunted unto the said Constant Silvester and Nathaniell Silvester, to the proper use and behoofe of the said Constant Silver and Nath*ll* Silvester their Heires and Assignes for ever, fully freely and clearly in as large and ample manner and forme, and with such full and absolute Immunityes and Priviledges as heretofore is expressed, as if they held the same immediatly from his Maty the King of England &c and his Successores, as of the Mannor of East Greenwich in the County of Kent, in free and common Soccage and by fealty onely; Yeilding rendering and Paying yearly and every yeare, unto his Royall Highness the Duke of Yorke, or his Heires or to such

governour or governours as from time to time shall by him be constituted appointed and as an Acknowledgment, one Lambe, upon the first day of May, if the same shall be demanded; Given under my hand and Seale, at Fort James in New York, on the Island of Manhatans, the 31th day of May in the eighteenth yeare of the Raigne of Our Soveraigne Lord, Charles the Second by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith &c And in the yeare of our Lord God 1666.

RICHARD NICOLLS

Entred and Recorded in the
Office at New York, the day
and yeare above written.

Matthias Nicolls Secr

Note: The name of the grantees is spelled Silvester and not Sylvester in Governor Nicoll's grant.

Previous to giving the above Manorial Grant, Richard Nicolls had decreed that Shelter Island should be known as "a distinct Island," in the following public declaration: "Know all men by these presents, that I *Richard Nicolls*, Deputy Governor under his Royal Highnesse the Duke of Yorke, of all his Terrytoryes in *America*, for divers good reasons and consideracons mee thereunto moving, have thought fitt, and by these presents do ordaine, That the Island commonly known and called by the name of Shelter Island, scituate and lying toward the East end of Long Island, bee from henceforth (or till further Order) reputed as a distinct Island under this Government, and not lyable to the Rates of any Township, to be levyed or raised by the Officers thereunto appointed; Provided only, that in any action of the case, Trespasse or damage, which shall or may arise betwixt any Person relating to Long Island and Shelter Island the Partyes grieved shall bee heard in the sessions of the East Riding in the same manner and forme, as is proscribed and Enacted in the present Lawes, and the right determined accordingly without any distinction of Persons or places."
March 1664-5

*Richd Nicolls**

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* Doc. Rel. to the Col. Hist. of N. Y., vol xiv, 566.

1989